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Title : CONTINUITY IN THE ACTIVITY BUDGETS OF CAPTIVE BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS (TURSIOPS TRUNCATUS) ACROSS SEASONS

Category : Behavior

Student : M.A./M.S.

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Abstract : The activity budgets of eight captive bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) were examined over a 12 month period in order to investigate the possibility that seasonal changes in their daily routine, average daily temperature and average amount of daylight would affect their behavior. The eight dolphins that comprised our sample consisted of four adult females and their four calves. These dolphins were housed at a facility in which the dolphins' daily routines varied based on the time of year, as did the average daily temperature and average amount of daylight. For example, the dolphins participated in more shows during the summer season than during the winter season. There were also more guests with which the dolphins could choose to interact (e.g., by tossing a ball to the human) during the summer months than during the winter months. Activity budgets were constructed by recording the behavior of each animal over a 24 hour period using instantaneous sampling techniques during 4 eight-week periods, each eight-week observational period separated by a five-week period. Observed behaviors were grouped on the basis of activity level and behavior type (e.g., rest, low activity swim, high activity swim, low activity play, high activity play). Variations in the dolphins' daily routines were noted throughout each period, as were weather and unusual events. Although dolphin activity budgets did vary as a function of time of day and dolphin age, the activity budgets remained consistent across seasons. This suggests that changes in the dolphins' daily routines, changes in the average daily temperatures, and changes in the average amount of daylight did not affect the dolphins' overall behavior.